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## HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S OUTLOOK.

BY ROCKWELL D. HUNT, PH. D.

In an appropriate program, the Historical Society of Southern California has just celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of its founding. It has had a checkered career, and at times its existence has been decidedly precarious. The principal founder, Mr. Noah Levering, together with an overwhelming majority of the charter members, has long since passed to the great beyond. There remains active in the Society today only one of the founders, Mr. J. M. Guinn, secretary and curator. This anniversary occasion, together with the formal opening of the Historical Museum in Exposition Park and the Thanksgiving Meeting in Los Angeles of the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association, serves to focus attention upon this non-commercial body of lovers of history and particularly on its outlook for the future.

Having laid its foundations and having passed through the vicissitudes of the period of storm and stress, the Society is in position to look toward the future with confident hope. For years it had no abiding place; now it is assured a comfortable home in the new Museum building. Its valuable collection of books and relics was for half a generation almost literally thrown about from pillar to post; today, handsome mahogany cases are at its disposal, and a trained librarian is putting its books and documents into usable form. It is indeed taking on a new lease of life. The opportunity that now presents itself to the Historical Society of Southern California seems to me to be one of splendor. What are the chief elements of this vision of the future, and what must the Society do to make its dreams come true?

In the first place, there should be a larger and more representative membership. Henceforth, there will be no excuse for not having on the roll of members teachers and writers of history from all the southern colleges and universities as well as our great secondary and intermediate schools. The Society is neither partisan nor sectarian; hence political affiliation or religious creed is no barrier to any student of history. Special welcome should be extended to Catholic scholars, since the Catholic church played so large a part in the early history of our commonwealth. Representatives of old Spanish families should be attracted, and Native Sons and Native

Daughters of the Golden West should by no means be overlooked. Indeed, there is no doubt that the application of any man or woman imbued with the spirit of our romantic history will be favorably acted upon.

The Society will not be content with a meager collection of books hidden away where they can do no one any good and a handful of relics kept away from the sight of the busy throngs; it will demand that its Library and Museum become a great and living institution. To that end the present collection of books and historical materials—by no means to be despised either as to quantity or quality—must be regarded as a mere nucleus, which will attract a steadily accelerating current of important volumes and articles. An expert librarian must be ever ready to serve the public; every facility for research work must be accorded to the investigating scholar. Through these agencies the Society must assiduously collect and preserve current materials—the deed of today becomes the history of tomorrow. Publications of other historical societies, university publications, government reports, newspaper files, programs of local celebrations, political circulars, records of industrial disputes, and all kinds of interesting ephemera must be industriously and ceaselessly gathered in, classified and made available to all comers.

The enviable record of the Society in publishing historical studies and sources must be sustained: from the vantage ground of the eight volumes of publications, sought after far and wide, the Society must go forward in putting forth still more worthy studies, substantial and authentic monographs, and translations and reprints of important but unavailable documents. If the very best is to be accomplished, there must be a great coöperative work of love among historical scholars, for no one has leisure or ability to compass the task alone. A larger number of enthusiastic members must be producing historical papers: each will prove a healthy stimulus to the others.

It should be the legitimate aim of every historical society to promote and improve the teaching of history. The true university professor must be a trained and competent investigator; the high school instructor will be a better teacher if he is spurred to be also a productive scholar; the teacher of history and civics in any grade of advancement will be more efficient for being an active member of an alert historical society. Moreover, the Society should make it a special point to note and investigate the work being done in schools of every grade, analyze the courses offered, scrutinize the teachers' syllabi, and thus stimulate to a higher standard this most important branch of study. As it enters hopefully upon a new era of endeavor, the local Historical Society will seek the efficient dis-

charge of all its more significant functions, including the following:

1. Collection and preservation of every kind of historical data, not only that which is already recognized as of historical value, but also present-day materials that will become increasingly important with the flight of the years.
2. Investigation of state and local history. The particular field for the local Society is Southern California: this field, full of richness in spite of the good work already done, must be assiduously cultivated.
3. Publication of results in permanent form. This is not only a spur to those patiently engaged in the work of research, but is also a contribution to scholarship everywhere and a genuine service to posterity.
4. Fostering better standards of history teaching, a function that has hitherto been too much obscured, but that is magnified in importance when one considers the necessity of sound instruction as a condition to sound, intelligent citizenship.
5. Creation of the historical consciousness. There is no safer antidote to wild and irrational social agitation than the sane ballast of historical-mindedness; this it is an important function of the Historical Society and of historical studies to create and sedulously preserve. Acquaintance with our history interprets the past to the present and shows us how the things that are came to be from the things that were.

Without seeking to enumerate other and more secondary functions proper enough in themselves—the marking of historical sites, the study of genealogy and heraldry, combating the more commercial if not sordid spirit everywhere so rife, the pursuit of antiquarianism, and the rest of them—it will suffice to remark that the Historical Society of Southern California, deserving well of this public, is today the possessor of a splendid opportunity. Standing upon an honorable past, let it build well the superstructure on the enduring foundations already laid.



**JAMES MILLER GUINN, A. M.**

(From Photo of 1883)

One of the founders of the Historical Society of Southern California.  
Has served as Treasurer, President, Secretary and Curator. Member of the Board of Directors 1883 to date (1914). President of the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association, 1913.